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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9690
INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBSSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 14032

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KPAL](#)
SUBJECT: ISLAMIC GROUP, HAMAS, OUTLAWED

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON SEPTEMBER 28, THE ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTRY ANNOUNCED THAT THE PALESTINIAN (SUNNI) MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALIST ORGANIZATION, HAMAS, HAD BEEN OUTLAWED. ACCORDING TO THE IDF ANNOUNCEMENT, MEMBERS OF HAMAS, OR THOSE WHO SUPPORTED OR PARTICIPATED IN ITS ACTIVITIES WOULD BE SUBJECT TO DETENTION AND PROSECUTION.

3. THE SPIRITUAL LEADER OF HAMAS, SHEIKH AHMED YASSIN, HAS BEEN IN ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION FOR A NUMBER OF MONTHS. HAMAS EMERGED AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING. ALTHOUGH IT EMERGED FROM THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, ITS AIMS INCLUDE A MUSLIM PALESTINIAN STATE AND IT PROMOTES VIOLENCE AS A MEANS OF ACHIEVING THIS OBJECTIVE AND OF "PURIFYING" MUSLIM SOCIETY. HAMAS IS STRONGEST IN GAZA BUT ITS INFLUENCE HAS SPREAD TO THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK.

4. ACCORDING TO MOSHE DAYAN, DEPUTY TO GOI CIVAD COORDINATOR SHMUEL GOREN, AND CIVAD ANALYSTS, HAMAS HAS GROWN CONSIDERABLY IN STRENGTH IN GAZA IN RECENT MONTHS. IT HAS INCREASINGLY TARGETED SO-CALLED COLLABORATORS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES DEFINED BY THE ORGANIZATION AS ANTI-ISLAMIC. ACCORDING TO THE IDF, HAMAS IS ALSO STRENGTHENING ITS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND REMAINS HARDER TO PENETRATE THAN OTHER PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS. IDF ANALYSTS HAVE ALSO ASSERTED THAT HAMAS HAS BECOME A MAJOR INFLUENCE IN GAZA AND, BECAUSE OF ITS WILLINGNESS TO USE VIOLENCE TO INTIMIDATE OTHER PALESTINIANS, MAY HAVE BECOME THE DOMINANT FORCE THERE.

5. COMMENT: EARLIER IN THE UPRISING, SOME ISRAELI OCCUPATION OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT HAMAS SERVED AS A USEFUL COUNTER TO THE SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS LOYAL TO THE PLO. A NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS LOYAL TO THE PLO ALLEGED THAT THE IDF WAS USING HAMAS FOR SUCH A PURPOSE. OUTLAWING THE ORGANIZATION INKATES THAT THE IDF NO LONGER SEES -- IF IT EVER DID -- UTILITY IN ALLOWING HAMAS TO OPERATE. THE ISRAELIS MAY HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY TROUBLED OVER THE DIFFICULTY OF PENETRATING THE ORGANIZATION. AS HAMAS HAS DIRECTED MORE VIOLENCE AGAINST ALLEGED COLLABORATORS, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES DECIDED ACTION WAS NEEDED TO DISCOURAGE ITS FURTHER GROWTH.

6. COMMENT CONTINUED: WHILE A NUMBER OF OUR PALESTINIAN INTERLOCUTORS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HAMAS HAS GROWN IN STRENGTH, PARTICULARLY IN GAZA, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT CLAIMS THE ALLEGIANCE OF A LARGE SEGMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION. WE SUSPECT IT REMAINS LESS INFLUENTIAL IN THE WEST BANK. NONETHELESS, THE CHRONIC NATURE OF THE UPRISING COUPLED WITH STRINGENT ISRAELI SECURITY MEASURES, HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO GREATER VIOLENCE WITHIN THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY IN GAZA. IN ADDITION, ISRAELI DETENTION/EXPULSION OF MANY PALESTINIAN SECULAR NATIONALISTS HAS LEFT THE STREETS OPEN TO YOUNG TOUGHS WHO FIND IT ATTRACTIVE TO CLAIM RELIGIOUS, AS WELL AS NATIONALISTIC MOTIVES TO JUSTIFY THEIR ACTIONS. END COMMENT

